

To Have and to Hold by [talesfromthesnogbox](#)

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Summary:

Mike can't wait to propose to the girl of his dreams, the love of his life, but he forgot about a certain tradition... asking her father first.

1. The Ring

Author's Note:

Alright so don't kill me, I know this tradition is really outdated and I personally kind of hate it, but I thought it would be really sweet to watch Mike go through with it, and I've seen the idea being bounced around on Tumblr so I went with it.

I promise it's not as painful as my last fic.

Karen watched her only son Mike close the front door and lean against it, smiling blissfully.

She hoped he didn't notice her watching him, knowing his mother snooping on his private moment of contemplation would embarrass the boy... no... man.

Now twenty-two years old, Mike had finished college top of his class and secured himself a good job. She couldn't be more proud of her boy, but she knew there was one more "adult" thing he wanted to do, one more thing they'd spoken about briefly before moving out on his own.

See, Karen knew her son's heart better than he knew himself. He was an open book, and although he'd tried to keep his emotions hidden from her, she could always tell what he was feeling, and Karen knew what he was currently feeling would never go away. She herself hadn't felt that romantic tug of the heart since she was young, but she knew Mike's flame wouldn't die out.

El had been a constant in Mike's life since that fateful November day in 1983. Karen once again could tell her young teenage boy had his heart broken, and for a year, he was nearly insufferable to be around. Until one day, one day after Snow Ball '84, he was a changed kid. Chief Hopper had come to Karen and explained everything about his strange adopted daughter and how her son had come to know her. She didn't believe it at first, but he was adamant that she had to trust them.

At first, she went along with their little practical joke of a backstory, engaging with El when she came around the house, treating her like any one of Mike's other friends, until one day she saw it. Her mind reeled as the girl made Mike's Dungeons and Dragons game pieces float in mid air, putting them away in their respective places before wiping the drip of blood from her nose. Holy shit, Karen thought, heart pounding as she descended the stairs, snacks in hand.

Despite the... telekinesis, her son was absolutely enthralled with El. His face lit up at the mere mention of her name, and his pale cheeks turned red at his nonchalant attempts of warding off questions. They "officially" labeled each other as boyfriend and girlfriend when they hit sixteen, but Karen knew that they'd been together far earlier than that. Nancy had told her about their sweet kiss at the Snow Ball, and Karen already knew he was in it for the long haul. She suspected their waiting to announce anything officially had much to do with El's father, the chief of police.

Mike's bounding up the stairs brought Karen back to the present, and she followed after the boy, knocking on his door lightly.

"Mike, sweetheart? Can I talk to you?"

He opened the door and smiled at his mother, allowing her in and taking a seat on his bed, patting the spot beside him.

"You know, you've been dating El for a few years now."

Mike rolled his eyes. "Mom, you had this talk with me when I first started dating her, I don't think I need it again."

"Oh! No, no, that's not what I came up here for. I wanted to give you something."

He looked at her inquisitively as she drew something from the pocket of her apron. It was a little velvet box, and instantly, Mike wanted to cry and throw up at the same time.

"Mom..."

"I know you've been talking about proposing to El for a few months now. I saw the ring catalogues in your room last week and thought I

might help you out a little.” She opened the box to reveal a delicate diamond nestled atop a thin gold band. The ring was familiar, it was beautiful, it was perfect. “Your grandmother gave it to me to pass onto you years ago. The woman’s intuition... she knew right from the moment she met El that you would end up with her. She wishes she could have been the one to give it to you, she thinks you’ve had it for years, but I told her I wasn’t giving it to you until I knew you were ready.”

Karen handed Mike the box, and took it without hesitation, lifting the ring from its careful holder and turning it in the light.

“Now, I know it’s not the style right now, you don’t have to take it if you wanted to—”

“No! Mom, it’s perfect.” The smile that crossed Mike’s face was one of the warmest she’d ever seen on him, and she knew he was absolutely right. It would suit the girl wonderfully, not flashy, nothing elaborate, simple and beautiful. “I... thank you... oh my god thank you. I have to call Nana.”

“Yes, you should. She’s been waiting by the phone for this call for years.” Karen let out a giggle. “So, when are you going to ask her?”

He’d planned on doing it in the New Year, maybe just before Valentine’s Day, but now that he had a ring, he wanted her to have it now. “Tomorrow. I’m just going to—”

“Whoa, hold your horses there loverboy. You only get one shot at this, don’t be like your father and just hand her the ring, you should do something special.”

He thought about what his mother had said for a moment. “Alright, Christmas morning. We were planning on staying at the cabin anyways, I’ll ask her then.”

Karen smiled. It was a wonderful idea, really. Christmas was a perfect time to celebrate the couple, and it was only weeks away.

“You should go talk to Chief Hopper this week then. Not down at the station, maybe go visit him and Joyce at home.”

Mike's face fell. Right. He would be expected to ask for her hand first.

2. Dad's Permission

Summary for the Chapter:

Mike's secured the ring, but now he'd have to talk to Hop. *gulp*

Notes for the Chapter:

I didn't plan on posting this tonight. Enjoy fam.

Mike stepped up on the porch, knocking on the same door he'd been knocking on since he was a kid.

It was a little odd being at the Byers' house and not being there too see Will or El. After Jim and Joyce got married, they all became one big happy family, all residing in the house that was all too familiar to Mike.

He gulped as he heard the Chief's footsteps and smiled nervously as the door opened to reveal the large man.

"Oh, hey kid. Will's still at work and El's classes are running late. They should be home in a few hours though." Jim was about to close the door, wanting to get back to his nap on the couch when Mike stepped up over the threshold.

"Actually Chief, I was here to talk to you."

Jim frowned, but let his daughter's lanky boyfriend in anyways. "Alright, take a seat on the couch then, you know where it is." He walked towards the kitchen. "Can I get you a beer? Perhaps something stronger?"

"Um..." Mike started anxiously, unsure of what to say since he'd driven over.

The Chief arrived, hands full with two tumblers of what Mike could only assume was whiskey. He didn't love the drink, but he didn't hate it either, and he knew the Chief's gesture was out of kindness and respect for the young man.

“Might help take the edge off.” Jim smiled, almost positive he knew what Mike’s visit was for.

Mike nodded and took a sip. It was good, must’ve been the expensive stuff the Chief kept hidden away.

“So, Wheeler, what brings you over here on this fine afternoon? Shouldn’t you be at work?”

“No,” he replied, shaking his head, “I had a few things to tend to so my boss gave me the afternoon off.”

“I see. Must be some important business you’re up to today then.”

“Yeah, yeah it is.” Mike smiled, feeling the weight of the ring in his pocket.

“So, are you gonna spit it out, or am I going to have to coax it from you?”

Shit. Mike gulped loudly and shook his head. “I... well... um... I wanted to ask your permission to—”

“No.”

“What?” Mike stood up, making himself taller than the Chief who was lounging comfortably on his Lazy Boy.

“I said no.”

He could feel tears coming to his eyes. Mike wasn’t planning on the Chief to flat out deny him. Sure, they’d butted heads in the past, but he didn’t think that the Chief hated him enough to not allow him to marry his daughter, the woman he’d loved since he was thirteen years old. They stared each other down for a minute, and Mike wanted to throw punches and push him and scream at him like he’d done when he was thirteen.

“Chief, I’m sorry, but I love your daughter. I came over here to talk to you about proposing to her because she’s my whole world. I don’t know why you hate me, but El loves me, and we’re going to get married with or without your permission. I’ve got the ring and all,

we'll run away together. She'll be upset, she'll be pissed at you, I hope you know that, but we'll do it anyways."

"Exactly why you don't need my permission." Jim smiled and pushed Mike back into his seat, leaning forward, resting his elbows on his knees. "Mike, you're both adults. You don't need my permission to marry El."

"Then why... why did you say no?"

"Because I don't want you to ask for my permission, kid. I know you're gonna go out and do it either way. You should be asking for my blessing."

"I'm sorry, I'm not following. Are you seriously giving me a lesson in semantics right now?" Mike's head was reeling. He had no idea how to feel.

Sure, Jim had been a tad overprotective of El. After losing Sara, he never thought he'd have someone call him "Dad" again, but then he found El, and he got the second chance he'd secretly been praying for. His protectiveness of the girl stemmed from her outrageous upbringing. He didn't want to see his little girl get hurt, not after she'd experienced enough pain to last a lifetime. Of course, like any parent he questioned whether or not his kid was ready for certain steps in their life, but he didn't run for his shotgun when he'd happened upon the box of condoms hidden away in her nightstand three years back.

"No, kid. All this asking the father thing, it's bullshit. I don't own El, she's not my... property, she's my daughter. You don't need to ask me permission for what you can and can't do with her. Please don't ask me permission, it's creepy and weird."

"So... are you upset that I want to marry El?"

"Upset?" Hop looked at Mike with confusion. "What about my last statement makes you think... never mind. Mike, I'm not... I'm not over the moon about it, you're both really young, but you're right. She loves you, and I don't even think I can comprehend how much you love her."

That made Mike smile. All he wanted was for everyone to know how much he loved El.

“You make her so happy Mike, you know I just want what’s best for her, so yes, you have my blessing. But it’s up to her to say yes.”

Mike stood once again to hug Jim. That was it, he’d done it. A huge weight was lifted off Mike’s shoulders. Ring, check. Hopper’s blessing, check. Proposal speech... that was still in the works.

“So, have you picked out a ring yet?” Jim asked Mike, nonchalantly.

“Yeah, I have actually. It was my grandmother’s, she wanted El to have it.” He pulled it out of his pocket and opened the box, handing it to Hopper.

Jim touched the delicate ring gently, and suddenly, it hit him. Tears sprang to his eyes as he imagined his little girl, the feisty, skinny little girl he’d found terrified and freezing ten years ago all dressed up in a white gown as he walked her down the aisle. After Sara, Jim never thought he’d get to do this, never thought he’d get to scare his daughter’s boyfriend then laugh about it later, he definitely never imagined himself in the exact position he was currently in. He’d only been with El for half of her life, and her, a fraction of his, but he’d do anything for her, and now it was time for Jim to pass that responsibility onto the boy... no man... sitting across from him.

He let out a gruff chuckle, hiding his emotions from his daughter’s boyfriend.

“It’s beautiful, Mike. She’ll love it almost as much as she loves you.”

“Thank you Chief.”

“How many times have we been over this? It’s Jim.” He ruffled Mike’s hair, clinking his glass against Mike’s on the table and taking a sip of his whiskey. “So when are you gonna ask her?”

“Christmas morning. I didn’t want to wait that long, but I want it to be special, and I know how much El loves Christmas.”

Jim nodded. “She’ll love that, kid. She’ll absolutely love it.” He knew

that the two of them had planned on staying in the cabin for Christmas morning, wanting it to just be the two of them for the first time after Mike's college graduation. They still lived at home, but they wanted some privacy, they wanted to feel like adults, which honestly, Jim couldn't argue with. "Just... please no grandkids until you're at least twenty-five."

Mike's face went red. "No... of course not."

Jim laughed out loud. "Lighten up, kid. I'll let you go, but first, to El." He raised his glass and clinked it against Mike's, smiling at the man he would soon call his son-in-law.

Notes for the Chapter:

Yeah as if I'd actually write Hop to not allow Mike to marry El. Anyways, brace yourself for the proposal?

3. Christmas Morning

Summary for the Chapter:

Mike finally gets to ask the girl of his dreams to marry him... he's never been more nervous in his life.

Notes for the Chapter:

Last chapter! Merry early Christmas!

El *loved* Christmas. At twelve years old, the whole world outside the lab seemed too big, too noisy, and she didn't understand why gifts were exchanged, but she didn't complain as Hopper showered her with new clothes, some magazines, comic books and makeup.

To this day, Christmastime was still the most magical time of the year for El, and this year would be the most special because it was the first one she'd be spending with Mike.

Christmas morning had been an ever-evolving tradition over the past decade, adding the Byers' to the mix six years ago when Hop and Joyce finally got married. But this year would be the first year she wouldn't be with her loving family for Christmas morning.

El was a little shocked when Hopper had suggested she and Mike take the cabin for Christmas morning that year. The two of them had done quite a bit of sneaking around when they were younger, she thought Hop was under the impression that she and Mike had never shared a bed before. But it was something, he was throwing her a line, and she'd take whatever she could get to be with Mike.

Her mind drifted to her wonderful boyfriend, currently snuggled

beside her on Joyce and Hop's couch watching *Christmas Vacation*, a family holiday favourite. He was always so genuine and patient with her, and she loved him with all her heart. Sure, it was such a small and seemingly insignificant thing, but having a night alone with him was better than any gift Hopper could have given El. It wasn't something they got too often considering they each lived with their rather large families.

"We should get going soon." He whispers in her ear, knee bouncing with nerves.

El nods and kisses his cheek, breaking her out of her thoughts of their night alone together. "Well..." she stands up, "we're going to head out."

Hopper frowned. "Easy there tiger, it's still pretty early, you don't want to spend some more time with papa bear?"

Mike turned red and scratched the back of his neck, not wanting to seem *too* eager to be alone with the chief of police's daughter.

"Yeah, we've got plans for the night."

Hopper gave Mike a pointed look, only making him go redder. "Oh do you now? Plans on Christmas Eve?"

"I—I mean, I still have some wrapping to do." Mike stutters, his face feeling uncomfortably hot.

Hopper laughs and pulls El into a hug. "Alright, well we'll see you kids tomorrow for Christmas dinner then. Be good."

He takes Mike into his arms next, patting him on the back softly and mouthing "Good luck" to him before they bundle up to face the cold Indiana winter.

Jim and Joyce watched them get into the car from the doorway, Joyce waving to them, when Eleven stuck her head out the car window. "Don't worry, I won't do anything you wouldn't do." Hopper raised his eyebrows, looking over to Mike in the driver's seat. The boy's eyes were wide as saucers, and they drove off without a look back. Joyce was beside him giggling at El's little stint.

Mike drove off, not looking back as El smiled in the seat beside him.

"What's wrong?" She asked, taking in his hands gripping the steering wheel so tight his knuckles had turned white.

"Uh... um nothing." Mike shook his flop of hair out of his eyes and continued looking forward.

"Hey, is it about what I said? Don't worry, Hop isn't gonna show up at the cabin with a shotgun or anything. You know he's not that kind of dad."

“I know.” Mike reached over and took El’s hand. “So, first Christmas morning together. I went over yesterday and decorated the cabin a bit.” He mentioned as they pulled up to the first place she’d ever called home.

El mock gasped. “Michael Wheeler getting into the Christmas spirit?”

He smirked. “Just for you.”

El was speechless when she’d opened the door. She’d never seen the cabin look so *clean*, or so festive. A huge tree decorated with lights and shiny ornaments sat in the corner by the window, a plate of decorated cookies on the counter. Two stockings hung by the fireplace, and there was garland covering the mantel. Little touches of Christmas were everywhere, and it was magical. She felt like she’d stepped into one of those Christmas movies she loved once upon a time.

“Here, let me take your bag.” He said, picking up her duffel bag off the floor and bringing it into the room she used to call her own. Mike had even thought to decorate that too. Cozy blankets were layered atop the covers, lights were strung around the headboard, and snow began to fall out the window. It was beautiful, and he did it all for their first Christmas morning together.

“Mike...” She whispered, wonder and amazement in her eyes.

“Oh, yeah. I thought it might be nice to have some decorations.”

El squealed and pushed him onto the bed, jumping on after him and nuzzling his cheek with her nose. "You're trying to butter me up, aren't you?"

"No!" Mike chuckled. "I just wanted it to be a special Christmas."

She kissed his lips lightly, smile still wide on her face. "It is, it's the *most* special Christmas because I'm spending it with you."

"Yeah... yeah it is."

The two young adults were in bed shortly. They talked and talked, about their friends, their families, their plans for the future. It took everything Mike had not to pop the question early and ask her right then and there. She was so beautiful, hair spread against the pillow, or snuggled up to his chest. Mike couldn't believe his luck.

Sleep took them slowly, traces of it creeping through in their voices as their conversation became softer and softer. Soon enough, Mike could hear El's gentle snores from where she was burrowed against his chest. His hear soared as he slowly followed her and drifted off, dreaming of what would come tomorrow.

Mike awoke to find El with her chin resting on her hands on his chest, staring up at him.

"Good morning, beautiful." He said, leaning in for a kiss.

“Good morning, Major Bedhead.” El giggled and ruffled his soft curls. “Merry Christmas!”

Mike’s stomach flipped. “Yeah, Merry Christmas! So, breakfast?”

El beamed at Mike as he worked in the kitchen. He made them both waffles, the real kind, slathered in fruit and maple syrup. They were delicious! She eyed the gifts under the tree and he knew right away she was ready to open them.

The two of them sat on the floor, surrounded by wrapping paper and boxes as they exchanged gifts. El had gotten Mike a custom briefcase among other smaller gifts. It looked like beautiful brown leather on the outside, but the inside was lined with Star Wars comic book printed fabric. He adored it, and it was perfect for his new job.

El had recently gotten her ears pierced, so Mike’s big gift to her was a pair of diamond earrings. She didn’t know it yet, but they’d go perfectly with her ring. She admired them in the light, watching them sparkle so delicately.

“I’ve got one more for you.”

“Mike! I thought you were trying to save up? You shouldn’t go and spend *more* money on me.”

He shook his head and smiled. "This is what I was saving up for!" He went into the closet and pulled out a huge box. El eyed the wrapped monstrosity curiously. "Well, technically *I* didn't spend a penny on it." He mumbled, but she didn't hear, El was already going to town.

Mike's heart was pounding in his chest. This was it, he was finally going to propose after a month of anticipation.

He knew her love for Christmas was almost as great as her love for him, so he'd wrapped the ring box within three larger boxes, all within the giant box for her to unwrap. Sure, it was a lot of time on wrapping, but she loved to pull apart the paper and ribbon, and he hoped she was surprised.

Finally, El had gotten to the final box. He watched her reaction as she opened it, but instead of smiling, she looked perplexed.

"It's... it's empty."

Mike's stomach fell to his feet. "W—what?"

El giggled. "It's perfect! You know I love unwrapping presents!"

"Wait... but there was supposed to be... oh my god." Mike dug through the mass of paper and strewn boxes everywhere to find the little black velvet case with the most important piece of jewelry he'd ever touch in there. His heart thumped nervously as he looked, not finding it. "Did I... Did I not...?"

He ran into the bedroom, ripping apart his duffle bag and finally, *finally* in one of the pockets he found it, safe and sound.

“I forgot to put it in the box!” He yelled excitedly, taking the ring from out of the box. He walked back to her, holding the ring behind his back as he walked back into the living room.

El giggled girlishly as he bent down to kiss her lightly before taking her hand in his.

“El...”

“Mike...” She smiled nervously.

Suddenly, he forgot everything he'd planned on saying. “I love you. I've loved you since we were twelve years old, even if I was too afraid to say it. The day you disappeared was the worst day of my life, and the day you came back to me after a whole year of waiting was the best day. I can't tell you how many times I thank my lucky stars for you being in my life, and god, I never want you to be too far again. That's... that's why it's an absolute no brainer for me to do this.”

El's eyes were wide as Mike got down to one knee, still holding her hand in his, but now, his other hand was in sight, and he was holding what he had been hiding before.

A beautiful, shiny ring.

El covered her mouth with her hand, her eyes watering as she stared at the delicate ring in Mike's hand.

"Jane Eleven Hopper," his voice cracked as he felt tears bubbling to the surface, "I love you with all my heart..."

"Mike!" She whispered tearfully and nodded.

"B-but... can I finish asking?" Mike chuckled at his girlfriend... no, almost fiancée, at her eagerness.

El nodded and Mike continued. "El... will you marry me?"

"Really?" She asked in a hushed voice.

"Yeah, El. I love you, I want to be with you forever."

She nodded again, quickly. "Yes, absolutely yes!"

Mike stood up and slipped the ring on her finger, her hands shaking. He admired it, how perfectly it fit her, and without thinking, brought her hand to his lips and placed a kiss over where it sat.

Both their tears flowed freely as he leaned over to kiss her properly.

The newly engaged couple stayed in their state of bliss until it nearly came time to leave for Christmas dinner.

“What do you think my dad will say?” She asked him, admiring how her ring sparkled.

“He... well he already knows.”

She turned to look at him. “What? Why? Why did he know before I did?”

Mike’s had El in his life for so long, he forgets that there are customs she’s unfamiliar with. “W—well I—”

“Does Joyce know?”

“Yeah, I mean, Hopper told her after I went and talked to him and—”

El started to get angry. “So then who else knows? Your parents?”

“Well, yeah, my mom gave me the ring.” He’d already explained to

her that it was his grandmother's. "And my dad actually looked genuinely happy for once when I told him I was going to propose."

"So let me guess, I bet the whole party knows too."

"I... um... yeah, I mean, I asked them for advice."

Tears came to her eyes, but Mike suspected they weren't happy ones. "Everyone already knows, and I didn't? I thought friends didn't lie, Mike."

He panicked. "El, friends *don't* lie, but this is different. This is... it's a big step. My mom gave me the ring, but she doesn't know we're engaged yet. And same thing with the party, they knew I was planning on doing it, but they didn't know when. Hop knows because it's tradition to ask for the bride's father's blessing. I—I guess I don't know why we still do it now, but I respect him, and I also didn't want to just spring it on him and give him a heart attack. El, everyone who knows is someone special to us, I wanted this to be the most special day, and everyone helped contribute to it. They'll still be surprised when we tell them, but I wanted *you* to be the most surprised."

"Promise?" She asked.

He bent down to kiss her lightly. "Promise. Now come on, let's go tell them."

The drive back to the Byers' house was *much* different than the ride

up. The young couple held hands, Mike lazily rubbing his thumb over the ring, and talked about what their reactions would be.

“Bet you Dad’s gonna cry.” El mused.

“You really think the chief would cry?”

She only nodded.

El was right of course.

It didn’t take long for Joyce to notice her stepdaughter’s sparkly diamond earrings, and from there even less time to notice the ring placed pointedly on *that* finger.

Joyce cried as El confirmed their engagement, which triggered tears from El as well.

“Congrats, man.” Will gave Mike a warm hug, knowing he was the first one Mike approached when he was thinking of proposing.

“What’s all this wailing about?” Hopper joined them in the living room, clad in a frilly apron and oven mitts. Joyce had done well to refine his culinary skills past TV dinners and Eggos.

“Ellie has something to show you, Jim.” Joyce smiled, moving out of the way so Hop could embrace his daughter.

“Kid spoiled you for Christmas I see.” Hop smiled touching the delicate stones adorning her ears.

“That’s not all...” El started, lifting her hand to show her father the ring.

Jim’s eyes went wide. Sure, he’d admired the ring when Mike brought it to him a month ago, but seeing it in the box and seeing it on his daughter’s delicate little hands were two different things. His expression turned soft as a huge smile crossed his face. “Told ya she’d say yes!” He said excitedly, pulling El into a hug before hugging her fiancée. “Congratulations kiddo, I’m happy for you.” Hop ruffled her hair.

“Thanks Daddy.” She told him with a warm smile.

“Oh my god, you’re getting so big.” El was right in the end. Hopper pulled his daughter into his arms and his tears flowed freely. “I just remember what a frail little thing you were, running from all those bad men, and now look at you. About to run off and have a life of your own, kids of your own.”

“But not for a few years!” Mike piped in, halting the emotional moment between father and daughter.

Jim ignored Mike. “God I’m so proud of you kid. I love you so much.”

“Told you.” El giggled, sniffing loudly as her father squeezed her tighter.

“Ah, c’mere.” Hopper pulled Mike in, embracing them both. Sure, they could be shitheads at times, but they were *his* shitheads, and he loved them both, no matter how hard he was on Mike.

“Okay, enough already with the tears.” Joyce said, wiping her own. “Come tell us all about it sweetheart!” She pulled El away, recounting their beautiful morning together.

Hopper looked at Mike, an awkward kind of soft expression on his face. “Thank you, kid.” He said, scratching the back of his neck, not looking Mike directly in the eyes.

“For what?”

“For making her so happy. She’s... she’s had a really hard life, and you were the first person to really make it better. I love her, she’s my little girl, and I’m really happy she has you, Mike.”

“T-thanks Chief.” Mike smiled at his father-in-law, unaccustomed to his soft expression.

“Now don’t you get all soppy on me with the tears and whatnot,

we're getting it enough from those two." Jim pointed at Joyce and El still teary eyed on the couch. "Oh you'll have your hands full, that's for sure."

"I know." Mike smiled, looking over at his fiancée beaming at him from the couch.

"Come on, let's get in there. This calls for a celebratory drink, and luckily, I came prepared." Jim pulled a bottle of fancy champagne out of the fridge. "Welcome to the family, Mike."

Notes for the Chapter:

Well that's all folks! I hope you enjoyed my little tidbit of a thing that wouldn't leave my head. Let me know what you thought, if you loved it, hated it, drop me a comment or kudos below. Thank you all for reading, I so appreciate watching the hit count go up! Happy holidays to everyone, I hope this warmed your hearts even just a little!